

REMARKS

The application has been amended and is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 20-32 are pending.

The Official Action rejected claims 20 and 28 under §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

Those claims have been amended so as to remedy the stated basis of rejection. Withdrawal of the indefiniteness rejection is solicited.

Claims 20, 21 and 29 stand rejected as anticipated by BARBER et al. 6,451,232.

Claims 20-22, 27, 28, 30 and 31 stand rejected as obvious over MOFFITT et al. WO 98/31524 in view of BARBER et al.

Claims 23-26 stand rejected as obvious over MOFFITT et al. and BARBER et al. in further view of SPENGLER et al. 5,076,880.

Claim 32 stands rejected as obvious over MOFFITT et al. and BARBER et al. in further view of SAVONUZZI EP 0482270.

BARBER et al. disclose a method for manufacturing a part, e.g. headliner 10, comprising a main body 12 and impact pads 13, 14, 15. The main body 20 comprises first 16 and second 20 coatings.

The BARBER et al. method uses a production line 28 for forming the headliner 10.

Firstly, the production line 28 includes a loading station 32, a heating station 34, a forming station 36, a foam-in-place molding station 38, a cutting station 40, and a fixture installation station 42. The production line 28 further includes a conveyor system 43, such as a chain conveyor, for transporting components between the loading station 32, the heating station 34 and the forming station 36. See column 3, lines 6-15.

As disclosed by column 3, lines 25-42, a frame 51 grips an extended portion 53 of blank 45 and is subsequently used to transfer the blank 45 by the conveyor system 43.

See also column 3, lines 61-63, disclosing that the main body 12 is transported manually or otherwise to the foam-in-place molding station 38.

The frame 51 is only used to transfer the main body 12 between stations. BARBER et al. do not disclose that the frame 51 positions the main body with respect to a half-mold. Accordingly, the recited feature of claim 20 "placing the assembly comprising the main blank (22) and the secondary blank (30) on a clamping frame (64) in a mold (52) having at least one half-mold (56), which frame positions the clamping margin (24) of the main blank (22) with respect to the half-mold (56)" is not disclosed.

Additionally, the forming station 36 is used to shape the main body 12 before the pads 13, 14, 15 are fixed by overmolding in the station 38. Accordingly, shaping the main

body 12 and overmolding the main body 12 in the BARBER et al. reference takes place in two different stations, whereas, claim 20 recites the coating and overmolding taking place in the same mold. Accordingly, this feature of claim 20 is not disclosed. More specifically, there is no disclosure of "overmolding in said mold (52) the plastics material (4) onto the assembly comprising the main blank (22) and the secondary blank (30) on the side of the main blank (22) opposite from the secondary blank (30)".

Lastly, the substrate layer 18 and the cover layer 20 have the same shape after trimming the extended portion 53. See, for example, column 5, lines 29-33 and Figure 2 of BARBER et al.

Accordingly, the newly added feature of "a part of the main blank, which is not cut off, forming the main coating (6) and the secondary blank (30) forming the secondary coating (14)" is not disclosed by BARBER et al.

In view of these differences between the recited invention and BARBER et al., claim 20 is believed to be patentable. Reconsideration and allowance of claim 20 are therefore respectfully requested.

As to MOFFITT et al., there is disclosed a method of forming a part in which a flexible insert 26 is applied to a flexible skin 32 (page 4, lines 17-19) in order to form a preform 35. While in the mold 36, the preform 35 stays flexible and takes entirely the mold shape (page 4, lines 21-22 and Figures 3A and 3B.

Accordingly, this reference does not teach the first, fourth, fifth and eighth (last) steps of claim 20. Thus, even with MOFFITT et al., claim 20 is believed patentable.

That is to say, claim 20 is believed to be both novel and non-obvious over either of these two references taken either individually or in combination.

The combination of MOFFITT et al. and BARBER et al. is improper for the following reasons:

1. a) In the case of BARBER et al., the stiff main body 12 is preformed at forming station 36 and the molding station 38 has a shape which is complementary to the preshaped main body.

When the main body 12 is inserted into the molding station 38 it already has substantially its final shape.

b) MOFFITT et al. disclose a method of forming a part in which the flexible preform 35, which consists of the skin 32 and the insert 26, stays flexible and takes the form of the mold when it is inserted in the mold, before the injection of the plastic foam.

c) As shown by a) and b), BARBER et al. and MOFFITT et al. concern two technically different manufacturing methods.

For this reason, one skilled in the art would not transfer in an obvious manner the clamping frame of BARBER et al. to the mold of MOFFITT et al.

2. a) The positioning of the preform 35, 40 of MOFFITT et al. in the mold is assisted by vacuum openings 46 (see page 5, lines 5-6).

Due to these vacuum openings 46, a frame which positions the preform in the mold is simply not necessary, and one skilled in the art would not seek to add such a frame.

b) A frame installed in MOFFITT et al.'s mold for maintaining an edge of the skin 32 would hinder an easy correction of the position of the skin 32 in case that the insert 26 is wrongly positioned.

Hence, one skilled in the art would not combine a frame for maintaining an edge to a mold as disclosed by MOFFITT et al.

3. Furthermore, the frame 51 of BARBER et al. is only used to transfer the main body 12 from one station to the other in the production line 28. There is no indication that the frame is used to position the main body 12 with respect to the mold.

If BARBER et al.'s frame 51 was combined to a mold as disclosed by MOFFITT et al., what would be obtained is a production line in which the preform is transferred by the frame to the mold, but not one in which the frame positions the preform with respect to a half-mold, as claimed in amended claim 20.

Hence, even by combining BARBER et al. and MOFFITT et al., the above features of claim 20 would not be obtained.

Consequently, a combination of MOFFITT et al. and BARBER et al. is improper and, even if combined, claim 20 remains non-obvious.

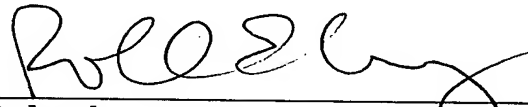
Accordingly, claim 20 is believed patentable. Reconsideration and allowance of claim 20 as well as the claims depending therefrom are respectfully requested.

Applicant believes the present application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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